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To cite this article: B Karsono *et al* 2021 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* **1101** 012028

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**240th ECS Meeting** ORLANDO, FL

Orange County Convention Center Oct 10-14, 2021



Abstract submission due: April 9

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# Place Attachment in the Riverfront Public Space Case of Malaysia

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**Abstract.** Many cities in Malaysia established their first development on the banks of the river. Urbanization phenomenon and technological advances then cause these riverfront areas developed and changed gradually. Progressively, inappropriate physical changes at the riverfront environment can reduce the usage and meaning of place together with the level of place attachment. The role of physical appearances related to the activities become famous issues in urban design discourses as an effort to establish the identity to the place; nevertheless, the research to measure the attachment level in public space is rarely done. This research is to identify the place attachment and its contributed components focus on pedestrian space in the riverfront area, public spaces which are favoured in Malaysia. Mixed-method approaches are implemented in this study by developing a framework to indicate the elements that affect the place attachment by the user. Surveys and interviews carried out in two riverfront promenade in Kuching and Malacca, there are Sarawak and Malacca riverfront promenade. 330 respondents involved in the questionnaire while 26 people were interviewed. Triangulation method is used to analyse the data and the results are achieved based on the objective of the research. The results found that some factors affected the level user's attachment, namely: their familiarity to place, length of engagement, personal background and user's role.

**Keywords.** *place attachment, familiarity to place, length of engagement, place dependence*

## 1. Introduction

Place attachment is related to the quality of user's experiences within the urban space, concerning the importance and function of a place who use and occupy the space. It is important to recognize precisely the specific quality embedded in a place resulted from the user's perception in a correct interpretation. Therefore, to investigate the quality of place attachment and its elements become an important effort to understand the identity of the place. Place attachment is an important component to generate and giving meaning to the place in supporting urban life and sustaining the activities within the city.

This study attempts to evaluate the physical elements in urban centres in Malaysia by identifying the characters and identities. Besides, external influences have led the cities to emerged in global features, which have reflected on the homogeneity of buildings shape and appearance, instead of loss of local cultural values, loss of urban attractiveness, the role of public space for cultural as well as social interaction. This transformation will influence the way users perceive and experience the places and will giving effects on their existing psychological meanings. Loss of psychological meanings can affect the

